Summer school strengthens international relations

“The IP has brought positive attention to the possibility of taking a semester abroad working with PMT”. This could have been a quote from the international coordinators of the summer school in psychomotor therapy, as this is in one of the aims. For three years they have cooperated about an intensive program (IP) which has been arranged as an international summer school supported financially by Erasmus Lifelong Learning.

But in fact, the quotation is from one of the students, and there are several quotations from the students proving that the IP has made them more aware and open minded towards the profession around the world: “I have learned that our education of our country is not the only and right way to learn psychomotor therapy”, “Through the IP we open up to other methods”, “We enjoyed the exchange between the different countries”.

Arranging a summer school is not a piece of cake, and neither is going on exchange abroad. The major obstacle is English, or rather lack of English. As the profession of psychomotor therapist is unknown in English speaking countries, by far the most research is developed nationally, and with the lack of a broader audience, no one has been encouraged to write in English. Hence, there is a lot of teaching material in Dutch, Danish, Swiss, Portuguese and French, but hardly any in English. Without a common frame, the psychomotor traditions have developed differently in different countries, and there is a potential gold mine to be discovered for the students who decide to go on exchange. However, the prospect of taking a part of your education when you understand neither the written nor the spoken language has discouraged the vast majority. Before the IP circle students of psychomotor therapist where among the group of European student going on exchange most infrequently. It goes without saying that in a world of globalization this is highly problematic.

Efforts have been made to diminish the language barrier. Special programs are made for exchange students, who start taking language courses before attending classes, and who attend courses with a great amount of practice and a small amount of theory. This has been very beneficial for those few who ventured to go abroad, and they have all been content with their decision. Some of them even say that it has been the best decision in their lives.

But what about the vast majority of students who were not tempted? And what about the professional development of the teachers? Even before 2010 there has been cooperation, but not on the same scale. Teachers have taught or given workshops at other university colleges, but the interchange was much smaller.

In 2010 the first IP was arranged, and this was a much greater challenge for the teachers. Not only were they asked to find material for their workshops in English, they were also paired with a teacher from a different psychomotor tradition with whom they were to prepare and carry out the workshop. Tough as it might be, it was also enriching for the teachers. Many of them believe that they will be able to implement the inputs and new way of thinking psychomotor therapy into their future work. Some of the teachers have been very happy about the cooperation and would like to repeat the experience somehow.

The IP circle has run for three years: 2010, 2011 and 2012 and has been arranged in three different countries: Denmark, Holland and Switzerland. The main theme has been rehabilitation – a multifaceted approach. Every university college was allowed to send up to 8 students, and the maximum capacity has almost been reached every year. During all the IPs the students have been very enthusiastic about the IP. They speak highly about the project, so it is certainly attractive for students’ who do not want to spend a semester abroad. But it is more than that.
As mentioned before it does encourage students to go on exchange, and this is evident not only from the number of requests that the international coordinators get, but also from the number of students who actually go on exchange. Both numbers have increased a good deal since the first IP.

The IP circle has finished, but this does not mean the end for the cooperation between the international coordinators, far from. During the three years they too have learned what each other represent not only in terms of professional identity but also in terms of approach to international relations and willingness to invest time and energy. And the IP circle has indeed strengthened these international relations: the coordinators have developed a profound trust in each other and an eagerness to continue the good work. Four more years, is what the coordinators and their respective university colleges are considering, and if they agree, it means that there will be an international summer school every year from 2013 till 2016. If it will become a summer school of one week or an IP of two weeks’ durations depends on whether the coordinators’ application for a new IP circle from 2014 to 2016 will be accepted or rejected.

At the moment a summer school in 2013 in either Portugal or France is on the drawing board.

International coordinators: From left, standing: Nadja Baur, HfH Switzerland, Sofia Santos, FMH, Portugal and Gerard Kessels, HAN, Holland. From left, sitting: Cor Niks, Windesheim Holland, Helle Brok, VIA UC, Denmark and Chantal Removille, ISRP, France.

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